

COVID-19 Town Hall Q&A



August 28, 2020

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

(Please note: the information in this document is accurate as of Friday, August 28, 2020)

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HUMAN RESOURCES

Pandemic pay: "Other key roles" is listed as eligible under essential non-clinical staff. Can you please clearly define which other key roles are eligible?

On Aug 21, the B.C. [government webpage](#) updated information indicating excluded management staff, fee-for-service providers (and their direct employees) or employees on leave were not eligible.

Why is pandemic pay not continuing through the entirety of the pandemic? The risk to frontline workers has not changed.

This is government program being managed by the province. Island Health will be involved for the purposes of payroll, but the terms were not developed by Island Health.

Any update on when pandemic pay can expected to proceed to next steps in the payment process?

On August 17, the Ministry of Finance provided health authorities and contracted service providers with updated information to understand what will be required to submit to the ministry to receive funding. Once the province (Ministry of Finance) receives the information from all health authorities and contracted service providers they will then disburse the funding. We are working with the both the finance and health ministries to ensure eligible employees receive their TPP as quickly as possible. We expect funding to begin flowing to employees at some point this fall.

I've been asked who the CONTRACTORS are on site (Cerner, Medtronic) so that they can be offered PP. Why are contractors being considered for pandemic pay?

Eligibility is not determined by Island Health. For more information, click [here](#)

Regarding the Aug 24th redeployment survey - can you please clarify who health care professionals in non-clinical roles are? Thank you!

We are asking the following Island Health employees to complete the survey by September 14, 2020.

- Nurses (RNs, RPNs, LPNs) currently working in direct care clinical roles in Acute Care or Primary Care/Urgent Primary Care.
- All health care professionals currently working in non-clinical roles. That would include RNs, RPNs and LPNs that are now working in support roles, such as Professional Practice, or in Leadership Roles where they no longer provide direct care to patients

Is the redeployment survey voluntary?

Yes

Wondering if community MHSU services (Detox, outreach etc.) is included in the redeployment survey?

Yes, any RN, LPN or RPN should complete the survey, wherever they work in the health authority.

Are coordinators a 'non clinical role'? Should they complete the redeployment survey?

Coordinators who are RNs, LPNs or RPNs should complete the survey.

Can non-clinical employees working successfully from home, have the option to permanently work from home or semi-permanently, even after the pandemic ends?

Yes, depending on the role. We are preparing a draft policy and procedure for senior leadership to consider on September 17 - this policy is being prepared for the long term, not just during the pandemic.

With the COVID-19 cases increasing, why is there no talk of moving staff back to remote working when possible, we were doing it successfully in the spring?

If you have been working remotely since the pandemic started, you should continue to do so unless you have had specific conversations with your leader to return to your traditional office environment.

For some large staff groups there would be costs (phones, laptops etc.) associated with permanent remote work, will there be any additional funding available?

Stay tuned - this will be in the policy and procedure. It will clearly outline what costs will be covered by Island Health and what will be the responsibility of the individual. There will also be a hybrid approach with part time at home and in the office.

With schools reopening, and listing a runny nose on the active symptom list that requires testing and self-isolation, how will IH manage the staffing shortages?

We will continue to manage staffing the way we manage it now. Daily we look at our staffing and make adjustments accordingly.

RE: Contact Tracers - Please email when the contact tracer positions are posted. Some past employees (retired) have been enquiring about positions :) Thanks!

Once the funding details are finalized by the Ministry of Health, we will follow our normal talent acquisition and posting process. Watch VI Hire for positions.

Will there be staff hired to perform the 24-72 hour pre-screening call outs? Some areas are not staffed enough to be doing these calls.

Yes, we will be posting and hiring these positions as soon as we have final approval to move forward

The challenges associated w/ COVID and heightened vigilance are depleting staff emotional/psychological reserves. Is there any consideration of added time off?

Time, leave, vacation is determined by contracted agreements. For non-contract employees we have harmonized these across the health sector.

Employees are encouraged to take their vacation time, it is vital for overall well-being. If you are feeling overwhelmed, our Employee & Family Assistance Program, Homewood Health, is there to provide support as we navigate the personal and collective impacts of this pandemic. You can access Homewood's services by calling 1-800-663-1142 or online at www.homeweb.ca In response to the COVID-19 Pandemic we have enhanced the services available to Island Health employees.

At a past Town Hall, HR said employees could carry 10 vacation days from 2020 to 2021. Where is this documented so that union employees can refer to it?

Please see your collective agreement or, for Non-Contract employees, the Non-Contract Terms and Conditions of Employment.

When an Island Health staff member has to stay home with a school aged child who has to remain home for mild COVID symptoms/testing/resolved, what type of leave is this?

Vacation leave. There may be other options within your specific collective agreement

PUBLIC HEALTH/MEDICAL HEALTH OFFICER

Call Centre wait times are 3-5 hours and this has not improved over the past few weeks. People are frustrated and the worry is that people will not get tested.

The call centre has been dealing with an increased number of calls over the past month as a result of rising COVID-19 cases in BC communities. We are working very hard to meet the increased demand, including the recruitment and training of new staff, and reducing the duration of appointments to increase the frequency of tests each day.

*This week we launched a new phone number for symptomatic direct patient care providers and first responders to access COVID-19 testing. **Before you call**, please use the [BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#) to help determine if further assessment or testing is needed. If testing is needed, direct care providers can call 1-833-737-9377 – seven days a week - 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Symptomatic patients and members of the public should call 1-844-901-8442 to arrange testing.*

In B.C., people who do not have symptoms are not being tested. We ask that people check their symptoms with the <https://bc.thrive.health/> app to determine if they need testing before calling the COVID-19 Testing Call Centre. For non-medical information about COVID-19 call 1-888-268-4319.

With contacts tracing and people clearly not following the quarantines put in place, shouldn't there be fines put in place or some legal repercussions?

Dr. Henry has been very clear that it is everyone's duty to comply with the rules and orders related to COVID, including the requirement to self-isolate and quarantine. At this time, there are fines in place for those individuals who do not comply with the Quarantine Act when returning from out of Country, unless they are exempt.

Similarly, the Police and other provincial enforcement officers have recently been given the ability to issue \$2,000 violation tickets for owners or organizers contravening the Provincial Health Officer's order on gatherings and events. They can also issue \$200 violation tickets to individuals not following the direction of police or enforcement staff at events or who refuse to comply with requests to follow PHO orders or safe operating procedures, or respond with abusive behaviour.

At this time with COVID increase, should masks be mandatory in public places such as stores until we get a better control over this?

BC's Provincial Health Officer has encouraged people to wear masks in indoor public places where physical distancing isn't possible, whether in a store, on public transit, or in the community. Island Health has taken steps within our facilities to reduce the risk of transmission with physical barriers and signs to promote physical distancing. You can help prevent the spread of COVID-19 by wearing a clean non-medical face mask or covering when you are not able to distance yourself from others in Island Health facilities.

There are people being swabbed refusing to isolate until they get their results. What can we do to enforce this?

Dr. Henry has been very clear that it is everyone's duty to comply with the rules and orders related to COVID, including the requirement to self-isolate and quarantine. Individuals awaiting COVID test results and have symptoms must self-isolate while waiting for the test results so they do not potentially spread illness to others. Those who get diagnosed with COVID-19 will need to self-isolate for at least 10 days from when their symptoms started. For more information on what to do if you have COVID-19, if you think you may have it, or believe you may require medical care, please see the BCCDC website at: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/testing/testing-information>

Return to school questions

- 1. If there are more active cases in the Province now than there were in April, why are we increasing our contacts (i.e., school)?**
- 2. We communicate the need to keep groups small. We also tell parents their kids will have groups of 60 or 120, per child. How do we reconcile the mixed messages?**
- 3. Why are we not starting school part-time to see how that goes?**

Dr. Bonnie has reiterated the importance of school for children to support both their emotional and mental health and their ability to socialize and learn. Being back in school is also crucial to support many parents in being able to work. A great deal of thoughtful work and consideration has gone into the plans to reopen schools this fall, including new health and safety measures, increased funding for protective equipment and new learning groups to keep children, educators and families safe.

To reduce the number of interactions between students and staff, learning groups have been developed for elementary, middle and high schools. A learning group is a group of students and staff who remain together throughout the school quarter, semester or year and who primarily interact with each other. Learning groups were recommended by the Provincial Health Officer to help reduce the transmission of COVID-19.

Staff and students (or their parents/guardians) must also assess themselves daily for symptoms of COVID-19. If any student or staff member has even mild symptoms, arrangements will be made for that person to return home.

For detailed information on B.C.'s Back to school plan, including the additional rationale to reopen schools, please visit: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/covid-19-return-to-school#our-plan>

My child's nose is always running. will he actually be sent home for this ?

Parents and caregivers are required to conduct daily screening of their children before they go to school. If they are showing symptoms of a common cold, influenza, COVID-19, or other infectious respiratory disease, or if they have been outside of Canada in the last 14 days, or identified as a close contact of a confirmed case or outbreak, they must stay home, self-isolate and seek care from a health-care provider.

Students and staff who experience seasonal allergies, or other COVID-19-like symptoms that are related to an existing condition, can continue to attend school; however, if you notice a sudden change in the severity or type of symptoms your child normally experiences, you should keep your child at home and seek advice from a health-care provider.

Please list the "active cases" and general location S/C/N, on the "Public Health COVID-19 Status Dashboard: 24-Aug-2020 (Public Version)" document.

The BCCDC recently added the active case count to their [public COVID dashboard](#) and discussions are underway within Island Health's Population Health and Epidemiology team to add this information to [our Public COVID Dashboard](#). Please continue to visit the site to check for updates.

INFECTION PREVENTION & CONTROL/PPE

With the increase and uptake in COVID-19 cases both in BC and on the island, are there any additional precautions being added?

Appropriate additional precautions have always been advocated through out the pandemic based on symptoms and diagnosis. Additional social guidance is also directed through the messages from Dr. Henry and PHO Orders we receive. These include physical distancing, mask wearing where this is difficult, frequent hand hygiene and not touching our face. It also includes minimum group numbers. Obviously in a hospital setting we can not restrict numbers in the same way that can be done in a social

setting, but it is important to be ambassadors with our friends and family and advocate on this particular issue. As this question highlights, there are increasing numbers of COVID-19 being identified in BC, a high number in young adults. It is really important for all to observe and advocate for the physical distancing and low group numbers the Dr Henry and the PH Orders stipulate

As more and more companies big and small are requiring the use of masks along with Manitoba health care now, I'm wondering why Island Health is not requiring it?

Physical distancing is always the first control that we can put in place to keep everyone safe. Masks are an additional protection. All staff are required to wear a medical grade mask when within 2 meters of a patient and each other. Areas are working very hard to physically distance patients, and patients go through multiple screening processes for symptoms. These are our processes at the moment.

Why are we not required to wear masks in the office? Would this not be a smart step considering our numbers are increasing?

*Physical distancing is always the first control we have to keep everyone safe. Masks are an additional protection. All staff **are required** to wear a medical grade mask when within 2 meters of a patient and each other.*

Why isn't it mandatory for client's to wear a mask for their appointments with Public Health?

Island Health care staff/employees are required to wear a medical grade mask when providing care or within 2-metres of a patient/client. This protects both the employee and the patient.

HCW need access to medical grade masks outside of hospital. Will purchase of medical grade PPE be available for us to keep safe offsite?

If medical grade masks are required for your job then they will be provided, however, Dr Henry and PH guidance has not recommended the wearing of medical grade masks off site at this time.

In the trailers at testing sites where highest level precautions should be taking place, nurses, MOA's and doctors are not wearing masks even with signage up!

Thank you for this information and it will be looked into.

With the COVID numbers rising I feel we have dropped the ball on important safety measures. Why are we not required to wear mask at work as well as the public?

Physical distancing is always the first control we have to keep everyone safe. Masks are an additional protection. All staff are required to wear a medical grade mask when within 2 meters of a patient and each other. Areas are working very hard to physically distance patients, and patients go through multiple screening processes for symptoms.

BC's Provincial Health Officer has encouraged people to wear masks in indoor public places where physical distancing isn't possible, whether in a store, on public transit, or in the community. Island Health has taken steps within our facilities to reduce the risk of transmission with physical barriers and signs to promote physical distancing. Members of the public can help prevent the spread of COVID-19 by wearing a clean non-medical face mask or covering when not able to distance yourself from others in Island Health facilities.

Made decision all my patients must wear mask in order for me to feel safe at work. Based on my recent experiences. Can I expect any negativity from my team?

Asymptomatic patients are not required to wear a mask outside of the Emergency Department as they should be screened for risk factors and symptoms. All staff are required to wear a medical grade mask when within 2 meters of a patient, which protects both the patient and the member of staff providing care.

Flumist will be offered again this year. Is that considered an aerosolizing procedure and different PPE will be required?

This is not an aerosolized generating procedure. No additional PPE is required.

CLINICAL SERVICE DELIVERY

With increase of COVID cases, what is the plan for the newly ramped up Surgery initiative? Many units under rotation changes--for nurses to be deployed?

Changes to rotations are being made to support increased surgical access. If a resurgence of COVID means that redeployment is necessary, we will address the issue at that time.

Will there be a reduction in the amount/scope of health services/exams offered if Covid-19 numbers continue to rise?

The B.C. health system has responded to COVID-19 with a one health system approach. Our plans will be to continue to deliver the same scope of services, but this will be guided through provincial direction.

Could we consider offering my virtual visits within the urgent care settings to reduce on-site visits for things that most often do not require physical exam?

We are actively working on the use of Virtual Visits within our UPCCs. Our Virtual Care team hopes to leverage this work to expand into other areas of Urgent Care.

Why are we so behind on staffing the call centres? the message always says unable to take your call due to high volume. Why wasn't this addressed earlier?

We are currently working as fast as possible to ensure that we have adequate staffing for the call centre. Unfortunately, the rise in interest in testing came at the same time as we were losing redeployed staff from the spring back to their regular work and we were in the process of hiring up to permanently re-fill those roles. We have been adding staff to the call centre every day for the last 2 weeks and continue to see marked improvements in the wait times. In particular, on Thursday Aug 27th we implemented a [direct patient care provider access line](#) for the call centre to fast track testing for health care providers and emergency personnel.

Is Island Health planning a universal visitor policy to support staff in these difficult conversations?

We continue to support the implementation of the provincial essential visitor policy for acute care that was announced in May. We recognize how difficult it is to balance the need for safety for patients and staff in our facilities with the need for support for patients during their hospital stay – and how this can lead to difficult conversations with both patients and their loved ones. We now have a lead in place that

is supporting more consistent application of the visitor policy as well as supporting ongoing improvements. Deborah Harver is our lead for this work and can be reached at deborah.harver@viha.ca

Can we use Zoom Video meeting from our home to meet with clients as long as consent forms are signed? Can we open zoom account with IH email address?

If you wish to have video visits at the home with your patients, please reach out to telehelath@viha.ca the team will help you identify the appropriate video visit solution for your use case.

For most use cases, Island Health leverages our new MyVirtualVisit solution, as it aligns best with clinical workflows. When Zoom is required, we will issue a Zoom for Healthcare account for your use. Please note that we do not endorse or support the use of Non Healthcare Zoom accounts (those users can sign up for online), as they don't meet our privacy and security obligations.

Since there is an increase in cases, will cohort units be opened again?

This will be determined by how many active hospitalized cases we have.

OPERATIONS & SUPPORT

With long wait times and calls being dropped, some nurses are being yelled at and threatened at swabbing stations why is there not security at the sites?

We are actively working through call centre work times. Protection Service Officers and contracted security are available to support assessment sites. Please bring this concern to your manager or contact pandemic@viha.ca and we will follow up.

Any updates on the ebike program?

A survey was recently released through the Weekly to understand interest in e-bikes and commuting habits of those interested. The results of the survey are being reviewed in order to determine viable options available for an e-bike program at Island Health. Information about any program options developed will be communicated via the Weekly and the intranet – watch for updates from Parking Services in the coming months!

With COVID on the rise, and obviously many questions from staff, will Town Halls return to weekly?

Town halls and communication will increase as needed to ensure you have the information you need. If you have questions please contact pandemic@viha.ca

Emergency Departments continue to see high patient volumes preventing distancing. Why is there not social media campaigns to encourage pts to see their GP, medical or virtual clinics?

We have been working with the Divisions of Family Practice to support social media campaigns for virtual visits and will continue to do so. A great example is [this recent campaign](#) in the Cowichan Valley.

Can there be clear guidance/communication to our physician partners (who are independent contractors) regarding not coming to work if they are not feeling well?

COVID-19 Town Hall Q&A



We are taking the clean hands, warm hearts approach to the COVID-19 pandemic; we're all in this together. If one of your colleagues or physicians appears unwell, you can speak to them directly to see if they're okay. If, after talking with them, you still have concerns, speak to your Leader.